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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 005650

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BANGLADESHI EFFORTS TO BRING JMB BOMBERS TO JUSTICE

REF: A. DHAKA 04090

[1](#)B. DHAKA 005627

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough, reasons para 1.4 d.

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. A disorganized, inter-agency BDG effort continues to scramble to catch JMB bombers and prevent future attacks, but investigators have failed to arrest seven senior JMB leaders or learn how the bomb attacks were organized, financed, and coordinated. The BDG remains receptive to USG offers of assistance but has not aggressively courted it, as it did, largely for domestic political reasons, on two prior occasions. We have good working-level cooperation with the police and military intelligence services, but BDG policymakers persist in requesting helicopters, mobile phone interceptors, and forensics labs. Poor BDG performance can be attributed to lack of political will for pursuing the case to its ultimate conclusion, investigative incompetence, blurred lines of authority, and inadequate resources; there are, however, several reasonable steps the BDG could take to address these problems. End Summary.

What We Have Done

[1](#)2. (C) Since the August 17 bomb blasts (ref a), we have:

A) Stressed on at least a weekly basis to senior BDG officials (primarily at MFA, PMO, Home Ministry, DGFI, NSI, and the military) the importance of bringing terrorists and their patrons to justice.

B) Brought to Dhaka a USG computer hard-drive expert (twice) and two USG bomb experts to meet with investigators and assess captured items. Access to investigators and the items has been good. The bomb experts have submitted their reports, and the mining and assessment is still underway of data recovered from a computer allegedly used to produce the leaflets found at the August 17 bomb sites. The use of this computer by police for other purposes before our expert arrived may have limited its potential yield. The computer expert returned to Dhaka November 21 to analyze four other captured computers made available to us last week by police after numerous requests.

C) Sent to the FBI in Washington via New Delhi LEGATT the following documents/information provided by the BDG: a list of the 274 suspects, an alleged JMB bank account number, statements by nine suspects, other telephone and bank account information associated with JMB suspects, 14 confessional statements, and details on a seized computer and accessories. Embassy Dhaka FSN's translated the documents in Bangla.

D) Pressed the BDG for greater clarity and detail on the nature of USG assistance needed to support the bomb blast investigations.

The BDG Response

[1](#)3. (S) The BDG has:

A) Assured everyone that it is determined to follow the road wherever it goes to bring the bombers to justice. However, it denies that the blasts are a manifestation of Islamic extremism by suggesting, with varying degrees of explicitness, that India and the political opposition are behind the bombers. Also, since violence is contrary to Islam, the perpetrators, it says, must not be real Muslims. The BDG has worked hard to pursue the bombers and prevent new attacks, but it has failed to learn how the attacks were organized, financed, and coordinated. Intelligence comes mostly from interrogations of detainees; as we saw with a Bangladeshi-American who was held for more than two months on spurious suspicions he had funneled money to the bombers, the Bangladeshis -- in this case, the notorious Rapid Action Battalion -- can be quick to torture an innocent man.

The BDG has posted large rewards for seven regional and national JMB leaders, but the most senior figure it has succeeded in arresting is JMB executive committee member, and operational Abdur Rahman's son-in-law, Abdul Awal. The BDG says it has twice come close to catching Abdur Rahman, once in Dhaka in September and once several days ago in Panchagarh.

By pursuing the bombers as criminals instead of religious extremists, the BDG hopes to evade questions about the role of its Islamist political allies in the attacks -- IOJ leaders have admitted personal contacts with Abdur Rahman, and some of the JMB detainees have past or current links to JI and its student wing. Also, because the ruling BNP is convinced that it needs JI and apparently even IOJ to win the next election, it resists actions that might undermine its relationship with the Islamists.

B) Given us good access to investigators and those overseeing the investigation, and it has been generally responsive, sometimes after long delays, to our requests for documents and other case materials.

C) Expressed interest in USG technical assistance on financial investigations but then failed to present specific needs, perhaps because of investigators' lack of basic knowledge in terrorist financing for framing such a request.

D) Pursued with us, at the senior level, its mantra for USG assistance in the form of helicopters, mobile phone interceptors, and forensic labs. Home Minister of State Babar argued to Charge that the BDG just missed Abdur Rahman in Dhaka because it lacked a helicopter. He also said investigators are delayed by having to get cell phone information from the service providers.

E) Formally brought charges against at least 23 alleged JMB bombers and their fugitive leaders.

F) On October 14, Interpol Red Notices were finally issued for Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman, though BDG suggestions that JMB leaders might have fled to India have tapered off in recent weeks.

#### Priorities and Benchmarks

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14. (S) Nearly 100 days after August 17, the BDG has failed to demonstrate it has the political will to recognize and combat Islamist extremism. Its first challenge is to acknowledge, by word and action, the nature and scope of its problem. To show credibility and commitment, it needs to hold coalition figures accountable for their links to extremists. Virtually no one outside the BDG doubts that a BNP state minister, a BNP deputy minister, and a BNP MP set up and protected Bangla Bhai and Abdur Rahman as Islamic vigilantes to fight their local enemies. The lack of any censure, investigation, or even acknowledgment of these allegations projects an aura of impunity. Another example is the current Commerce Minister and an IOJ leader who, recently arrested HUIJIB chieftain Mufti Hannan claims, protected him from arrest. Most recently, there is the challenge to stand up visibly against alleged JMB threats to kill judges, police, and now the minister of law unless Ahle Hadith leader Prof. Galib and other JMB detainees are released.

15. (C) Ultimately, there's no greater deterrent to crime than bringing criminals to justice. With the apparent exception of MP Ahsanullah Master's killers, the BDG has failed to do this in a single case of major political or religious violence. Credible prosecutions against the detained JMB bombers, the alleged killers of AL leader Shah Kibria, Ahle Hadith spiritual mentor Prof. Galib, and participants in the 2004 Chittagong arms haul would represent a significant step forward.

16. (C) Finally, there are several reasonable steps the BDG could take to improve its counter-terrorism capabilities and signal its commitment for moderate values. It could provide clear lines of authority in CT investigations and respect the role assigned to the lead agency. While the politics and the scope of the problem are different, the BDG showed it can act effectively bureaucratically when it turned around in 60 days its performance on human trafficking by appointing a dynamic senior civil servant with strong PMO backing to inspire and coordinate a inter-agency effort to identify, capture, prosecute, and convict human traffickers.

17. (C) In this vein, the BDG could, as we have urged PM Zia to do at least twice, elevate DGFI's CT wing to a CT bureau to give it the resources and stature needed to attract good people and give them the tools to succeed.

18. (C) Other indicators of BDG resolve could include shutting down local NGO's like the Kuwait-based RIHS that are found to be funding extremist groups, and to seek cooperation from the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments for tracing foreign funds sent to such groups.

19. (C) Openly defending Ahamadiyas and other religious minorities from extremist violence, in the name of tolerance and the constitution, instead of ad hoc behind-the-scenes pressure, would show a new BDG commitment to moderation and due process, two key elements in successfully combating

religious extremism.

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110. (C) This is the second of a three-part assessment of post-August 17 Bangladesh. Septel will suggest a USG approach for promoting BDG action against extremism, CHAMMAS